

DNR Dedicated Habitat Areas

Definition and Principles of Management

Definition of a Dedicated Habitat Area

- Dedicated Habitat Areas are a DNR administrative designation that will help with decisions about where and how the DNR promotes conservation of habitat for:
 - Specific federal and state threatened or endangered species; and
 - Species dependent upon interior core forest habitats on DNR-administered lands.
- Dedicated Habitat Areas are one of several means of identifying important biodiversity conservation locations by the DNR. Other designations include Ecological Reference Areas, specific game species habitat, and the natural areas and natural rivers programs.
- A Dedicated Habitat Area identifies a geographic area on the landscape where there is an emphasis on species-specific habitat, with a long-term goal of ensuring that these species are conserved as examples of our State's biodiversity. These include:
 - Habitat areas for threatened or endangered species, such as the Kirtland's warbler and piping plover, in association with species management plans that have been developed in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other federal land managing entities such as the U.S. Forest Service; and
 - Habitat areas for representative species requiring interior core forest habitat, including American marten, cerulean warblers, red-shouldered hawks, and northern goshawks.
- Dedicated Habitat Areas are a type of High Conservation Value Forest (as defined by the Forest Stewardship Council certification standard).
- Dedicated Habitat Areas may be located on DNR-administered State Forest lands, State Parks, or State Wildlife Areas.

General principles of management for Dedicated Habitat Areas

1. The emphasis of management within Dedicated Habitat Areas is the provision and conservation of specific habitat for the identified species.
2. Forested Dedicated Habitat Areas are managed for timber production, consistent with natural disturbance regimes, and forest composition and structure required for the species of interest, specifically:
 - For species-specific habitat areas: Forest management and timber harvesting activities (including prescribed fire) are conducted to maintain, restore or create the composition and structural forest conditions necessary to provide the habitat needs of the specific species, using silvicultural techniques to emulate the frequency and severity of natural disturbance regimes.

Species-specific management plans that have been jointly developed and adopted with partnering organizations (such as the Strategy for Kirtland's Warbler Habitat Management) provide detailed direction for management.

- For interior core habitat areas: Areas that also have some other designation (such as an Ecological Reference Area, Natural Area, or Natural River) shall be managed for those purposes following management direction provided in DNR policies and procedures and plans.

For all other areas, forest management and timber harvesting activities (including prescribed fire) should be used to create and maintain the compositional and structural conditions that emulate an intact, mature forest or other successional phases that provide necessary habitat for interior core species.

Specific emphasis is given to minimizing fragmentation of the forest by limiting the size, spatial distribution, and number of forest openings to that characteristic of the natural disturbance regimes associated with the specific forest type. This may be accomplished through the use of temporary access roads, by minimizing the number and size of permanent access roads and trails, and/or by mitigating the impact roads, trails, and pathways through the maintenance of forest canopy closure over such infrastructure.

Management direction may be provided by Regional State Forest Management Plans, State Park General Management Plans, State Game Area Master Plans, or other local plans.

Threats such as wildfire, natural or exotic pests or diseases may warrant other management measures, such as salvage harvests.

3. Existing land use activities and seasonal restrictions on access and use may be governed by DNR Land Use Orders of the Director, including those specifically for Kirtland's warbler (LUOD 3.10) and piping plover (LUOD 3.8 and 5.7) nesting areas.
4. Management will be adaptive.
 - Management strategies may change as additional information becomes available.
 - The network of Dedicated Habitat Areas will be monitored and evaluated for their contribution to the habitat needs of the identified species at the frequency specified in associated species-specific management plans, and every five years for other areas. This review cycle will allow for the potential addition or subtraction of lands from a Dedicated Habitat Area, designation of new areas, or removal of the Dedicated Habitat Area planning designation.